

At the Heart of Milton Keynes

Starting with just Â£50, an exercise bike and 5 members, Gill Robinson, a former Health Promotion Specialist, wanted to develop rehabilitation for patients with heart conditions out in the community and so the MK Community Cardiac Group was born. That was 28 years ago!

Now with over 400 members who attend specifically designed rehabilitation programmes, members are able to enhance greatly their standard of fitness, physical health and mental health. The transformation in the member's personal well-being is simply remarkable but just as reassuring for their families.

The MK Community Cardiac Group, by its sheer existence, alleviates the pressures on the NHS. The concentrated efforts of the specifically qualified health professionals and exercise teachers, and trained volunteers give the individual a better opportunity to return to work, prolong their independence and reduce the number of visits to the GP. In addition to the group's valuable work, members are likely to decrease their numbers of stays in hospital and have a reduced reliance on social care.

One of the younger members said, "Without the group, I'd still be shuffling along and struggling with everyday activities, just trying to get up in the mornings, let alone trying to get dressed. It was a black hole but it's a lot easier with the help and dedication from the group. I'm more confident and have more stamina. I still have a way to go but life looks better than I ever thought possible."

The vast majority of funding for the group comes from the membership and from donations. The CCG chips in with financial help for initial rehabilitation courses.

I met with Gill Robinson, the founder and manager, Ivan Pullen, the chairman along with patrons, Dr Gwilt, Dr Hilmy and Dr Mahendran and trustees at a lively Friday afternoon session and was immediately impressed by the positive atmosphere. After watching the group in action, it was clear the group is clearly a happy, jolly place and it was so good to see the physical and mental benefits the members were getting out of their exercising. Its success is an exemplar for across the country which we should be celebrating and promoting.

The National Health Service is under great financial pressure these days and this is an advancement in the care and rehabilitation of people with heart and breathing problems that effectively keeps people out of hospital.